

November 14 1974

Dear Jan + Mary, Robert, et al.

This is going out to all our relatives and to a number of friends. It comes with an apology that each letter isn't a personal one. I am presently preoccupied with a special Middle East issue of Fellowship, a most difficult task, though made clearer to me by this recent trip in Israel and the West Bank. Laura is still working very hard with Mobi Warren's cross-country speaking trip for the Vietnamese Buddhists and the FOR; in connection with that, we are driving up to Boston tomorrow night, along with Ben, Daniel and a friend who is presently staying with us, where we'll meet Mobi and travel with her through the weekend. The main part of the trip involves a stay with the monks of Weston Priory (the only monastery in this country's history to have been "raided" by the FBI, which had become annoyed with the inclusiveness of the community's hospitality); the priory is in K Vermont, on the eastern edge of the national forest.

Our family continues to enjoy good health, though I am limping a little for a hornet sting (a hornet crawled into my shoe during an ~~EX~~ FOR staff meeting the other day). Daniel will be 13 months old in five days. His walking, which began on his 10th-month birthday, has very nearly ~~it~~ turned to running now; he is incredibly intent on mobility. He also has a particular passion for turning pages in books, for putting things in boxes (it used to ~~be~~ just taking things out of containers), for apples, for typewriters and telephones, ^{and} for Ben...

Ben will be 12 years old the last day of this year. After a rather rough start in Hilltop Public School, he seems to be making headway and takes pride in his accomplishments. He pulled down an A for the first time in the current report card, and a B in arithmetic, which is really amazing given the 3 years in a "free" school during which he made no effort to do either reading or figures. The reading is still inching along, with much of the progress due to the continuing special help of Anne Welborn. Ben seems gradually to be giving ~~x~~ up his fervent conviction that he would never be able to read. His own passions at present include (and I will list them without comment or contrary wishes) cars, motorcycles, Macdonald hamburgers, the Planet-of-the-Apes movies and t.v. serials, and acting. He hopes he may become an actor, a hope he has persisted with for a year or more now. Toward that end, he has already found--without looking for it--a chance to do some modeling. His first appearance was in the New Yorker for November 4; his payment was to keep the hand knit sweater he modeled for the Hudson Valley Bazaar. (The owner had seen Ben at an FOR folk dance for Vietnamese orphans and asked if he would be willing. ~~XX~~ "Oh boy, would I! Are you kidding?")

Our motive in writing this, I'd better say before further news, is to ask whether you might be able to help us with a loan. We rather suddenly have come to realize that we are going to have to get a larger house and we realize that it would make much more sense to

be paying off a house than forever to be paying rent for someone else's house. There are several solid houses in the Nyack area that we are looking at with the help of an FOR-member and friend who has quite an enthusiasm for the things we do. But we will need about \$10,000 in cash for the downpayment and first year's taxes (which law here requires be paid in advance for the first year). All the houses we are looking at are in the \$35,000 range; they are fairly large old places in decent repair. The most promising is a high-ceilinged Victorian place x with 10 rooms, an attic and good cellar, plus a large yard, here in South Nyack in a racially-mixed neighborhood.

The need, in a general sense, has been with us for quite a while. Our main problem, in the tiny rented g house we presently have, is our propensity to hospitality. The guest room is ordinarily in use, oftentimes the living room couch (blessed with down-fulled cushions), and occasionally the floor. Those who have visited the house know this from first hand, and know how squeezed the place is to start out with.

So constant has been the hospitality that we h,ve decided that, quite apart from our hopes of adopting another child and having at least one more parente& by ourselves, we will need a place in which it is possible to have space for others to live with us for long periods, as well as space for short-term hospitality. The long-term sharing or extending of our family is important to us both b&cause of our own tendency toward community life plus our practical need for a larger family unit in order for the work and children we are committed to to properly continue.

Bgt what has brought this need for larger quarters to an unexpected and urgent head has been the situation of Laura's maternal grandmother, who is turning 81 in a few days. As many p&ceiving this know, she just recently moved to a retirement community in Florida near her son and daughter-in-law. This occurred when Dorothy and Al moved to Spain. Just last week, Grandma Graham blacked out, fell in her apartment, and revived four or fives hours later with an injury requiring hospitalization. Her son has decided that, w&hen she leaves the o&ddm&g&mm&h&mm& hospital, she should enter an old-age home. He and his wife have decided they cannot have her live with them. Talking with Grandma Graham on the phone, we realized this prospect is pretty devastating for her and so we're hoping and praying she'll agree to live with us.

This ~~xxxxxx~~ coincided with the arrival in our lives, as at least a temporary family member, ^{or} an old friend who had a rather serious nervous breakdown last year, forcing her to drop out of ~~xxx~~ college and enter a hospital. Now she is with us, will be helping Laura in her work, and helping us generally with home and family. We're utterly delighted to have this addition, and grateful: her presence is really the answer to a need we have had since Peter Koneazny left to join the New York staff of the Farmworkers.

So you can see, we are really in need of a larger living situation, and I suspect you would agree that it makes sense to buy a place in

the ~~s~~ area rather than continuing to rent. But, if that's to be, we will have ~~to~~ to find help, and the only place we can think of to look for such help is with those who have some trust and enthusiasm for the things we have been working at year after year.

I dare not call this venture a "house of hospitality." ~~It~~ It really isn't that in the sense the Catholic Worker uses the phrase. We don't anticipate being able to throw open our doors and lives to everyone who needs a response. Our first commitment will continue to be to the needs of our children and the whole family, and to the work we expect to continue with so long as there is breath in us. But hospitality has insisted in taking over part of our lives, and indeed it has been as much a gift -- in fact more a gift -- than a burden.

So: If you can help in any way, let us know as soon as possible how you can help and under what conditions. If a loan can be made only with interest, let us know how much. And let us know when you would expect to have it back, or what installments would be needed and at what rate of frequency.

~~Maximemomzpearmzypomga~~

Before finishing, let me add a few words about the trip to Israel. I was fortunate to be able to do my travelling in the company of Jean Roger, an old priest, bald and thickly bearded, who has lived in Israel for 23 years. He is a Hebrew scholar, pastor of St. Abraham's Church in Beersheeva, and was in the French Resistance during the final years of World War II. He is the Israeli correspondent of Le Croix, an archeologist, and well known both to Arabs and Jews, both within Israel and in the Occupied Territories. With him and a number of others, including two FOR members, we ~~went~~ visited throughout the country and saw a great deal on the West Bank. While I met with Zionists (of many different stripes) and with anti-Zionists, with religious people and with government (and would-be government) people, the most important time for me was spent with those who have, over many years, been working for nonviolent solutions to the many problems in both territories. While I hope to write about all these individuals in an article, I will especially mention here the Neve Shalom community, which has a center on Prophets Street in Jerusalem ~~and has~~ a rural community on land given them by the Trappist monks at Latrun (right on the hill across from the Crusader fortifications built by Richard the Lion Hearted, a spot held by the Arab Legion during the '48 war and a site of fierce fighting again in '67; see Oh Jerusalem! for detailed narrative of the first instance). Here a community of Jews, Christians and Muslims has come together, with much encouragement and practical assistance from the rather secular-radical ~~kibbutzim~~ kibbutzim that are thickly scattered in the region. Now they are working to found a "school for peace." My visit with them ~~proved~~ proved, it seems possible, providential for them in regard to the plans for the school. There is also some interest in the group in founding a new nation/ (or even bi-national Palestinian-Israeli) FOR. The community's founder is Fr. Bruno Hussin, a scholar, Egyptian-born, Israeli citizen, founder of Isaiah House in Jerusalem. Bruno lives in a seven-foot square overseas packing ~~case~~

crate on a ridge overlooking the road that links Tel Aviv and Jerusalem; he has put a couple of windows in and a screen door, a pallet for a bed, a space for his portable typewriter, a tiny closet, and then there are the books stacked here and there. Old kibbutz buildings from the earlier days of Israeli have been given to the community by various kibbutzim and these are lived in by the rest of the community. They are supporting themselves partly with bee-keeping; they raise chickens as well. And they help the Trappist monks with the grapes in the wide fields below. They are hard-working and immensely practical; I kept wishing we had such grounded, practical people in greater numbers in the US peace movement. They have to cart in their water and they have no electricity. It is an extraordinarily austere life, no doubt very like the early kibbutz movement. There is an intense sense of purpose and necessity about them, and a stubbornness. Their peace work has put them in touch with people throughout the area. (During my visit two kibbutz members from near Jaffa came to visit to talk over a project called "Oliva," which seeks to alter the racist feelings that many of European descent have toward the semitic people, whether Jew, Muslim or Christian, who are native to the region.)

Neve Shalom, by the way, means "oasis of peace." While it is small, rather young and certainly unique, there are a good many things, both in the Israeli and Palestinian communities, that have a similar flavor. I look forward to seeing what the FOR and other peace people can do to encourage these efforts. And I am personally grateful to be in touch with them and bound to them, as it has now happened, by friendship. These ties are nourishing in much the way that our ties with the Vietnamese Buddhists have been.

Forgive the poor typing and going on at such length. Let us hear from you soon.

Jim Laura
Jim

Here's the new Fellowship